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FEATURED

## Murder charges dismissed in Lancaster man's shooting death

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Mar 16, 2023

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Charges have been dismissed against a man charged with murder in the February 2021 shooting death of Sy'Veon My'Veon Howard of Lancaster.

Anquante Watts of Fort Mill was granted immunity on the murder and possession of a weapon during the commission of a violent crime charges in a March 6 court order signed by Judge William A. McKinnon.

Howard, 25, was shot about 11:15 p.m. Feb. 19, 2021, at a Circle K gas station in Fort Mill, according to the York County Coroner's Office.

Watts was in his car with his girlfriend when a group of three men approached them, including Howard. They were making threatening gestures and comments, while one appeared to have a handgun in a sweatshirt pocket, according to court documents from the Rock Hill Courthouse.

Watt “testified that he pulled his pistol out of the center console of his vehicle and put it in his lap,” according to the documents. He also testified that a man named Al-Qa’Sim tried to open his car door, after pressing a gun to the car window.

Watts testified that he feared for both he and his girlfriend’s lives, and pulled the trigger on his pistol while driving away from the Circle K. Several shots were fired, and Watts said he was not sure if he had shot anybody at the time.

Howard was killed in the gunfire exchange.

The order says Watts sought immunity under the state’s Protection of Persons and Property Act.

Watts was granted immunity because the court “provides immunity from criminal prosecution for any ‘person who uses deadly force as permitted by the provisions of this article or another applicable provision of law,’ ” according to the court order.

The order says Watts believed that “deadly force was necessary to prevent death or great bodily injury to himself or his girlfriend,” and that this was a reasonable belief, and he was protected because he was acting in self-defense.

The court also found Watts was not engaged in any unlawful activity at the outset of the incident, and only pulled out his own gun when he began to feel threatened. He did not threaten or brandish the weapon until the group began circling his vehicle.

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Haley